



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

THE DIRECTOR

December 1, 2009

The Honorable Betty McCollum
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman McCollum:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and funding for Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools. As a former educator, your perspective is particularly insightful, and I appreciate the time you took to share it.

As the President made clear at the White House Tribal Nations Conference on November 5, 2009, this Administration is committed to making sure that the First Americans, along with all Americans, get the opportunities they deserve. The education we provide our children is a key element of that commitment. That is why the Department of Education allocated \$99 million in Recovery Act funds to BIE schools through programs that include Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies, School Improvement Grants, and Education Technology State Grants. And, it is the reason that the Department of Education invested more than \$800 million dollars in fiscal year 2009 in programs like the Department's Indian Education Grants to Local Educational Agencies initiative, which supports after-school, tutoring, and dropout prevention activities.

While there is funding specifically designated for BIE schools both in the Recovery Act and the Budget, and while the Department of Education estimates there are hundreds of millions of dollars more that will benefit Native students through programs such as special education, Title I, and vocational rehabilitation, even taken together, this is not cause for satisfaction. Native Americans face some of the lowest matriculation rates and highest high school and college dropout rates. Some of reservations face unemployment rates of up to 80 percent. And roughly a quarter of all Native Americans live in poverty. There is much work to be done.

Thank you again for sharing your perspective and your suggestions on how to revise the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund to better support our nation's American Indian and Alaska Native students. I look forward to working with you in the weeks and months ahead.

Sincerely,

Peter R. Orszag
Director

The signature of Peter R. Orszag is written in dark ink, appearing as a stylized, cursive "P" followed by "Orszag". Below the signature, the name "Peter R. Orszag" and the title "Director" are printed in a standard serif font.